

## PRESS EDITORIAL

# County should include TDRs for rural areas

**T**he “transfer of development rights” is no longer a new concept in King County, but it is beginning to be used more as developers become familiar with it. We like the TDR program, but question whether moving development rights from rural lands to projects within the urban growth boundary is the best choice.

Simply put, development rights are allowable housing units or commercial space, based on the property’s zoning. In an effort to preserve open space, King County implemented its nationally recognized program in 2001, following a successful pilot program.

Developers who want to add density to a housing project are able to buy additional development rights from a rural property, leaving the “sending site” as open space forevermore. It must be in the public’s interest to transfer those development rights.

Moving development rights within the urban boundaries, provided there is a public benefit, is allowed within cities that have a TDR program, like Issaquah. In our mind, open space within the urban growth boundary may be even more precious. For example, moving TDRs from an urban creek-front property to a multifamily housing project makes sense to us. The creek frontage becomes open space while the housing project goes up a couple more stories.

Sending sites for TDRs are especially sought after on property that is forested, is in a critical building area, or is habitat for endangered or threatened species. Those criteria fit land in both urban and rural areas.

Allowing receiving sites for TDRs within the rural side of the county’s growth boundary makes sense, too. Development clusters are already encouraged to preserve open space; allowing TDRs could encourage more cluster housing and commercial space while preserving important public rural lands.

The county’s Comprehensive Plan review this year will look at all aspects of future growth and how growth will be in keeping with goals for sustainable living. It will consider environmental protections and infrastructure planning for the 289,000 housing units that could still be built in the existing urban growth area. Public hearings have already been held, with more scheduled for September. Comp Plan revisions are expected to be voted on in early October.

For more information, go to [www.kingcounty.gov/council](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council).